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# AN ALTERNATIVE TEXT OF KING AGAJA OF DAHOMEY'S LETTER TO KING GEORGE I OF ENGLAND, 1726

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## I

In an earlier issue of this journal I published the text of a letter to King George I of England written in the name of King "Trudo Audati" (better known under the name which he is given in local tradition, Agaja) of the west African kingdom of Dahomey.<sup>2</sup> Although dated 1726, this letter was received in England only in 1731, when it was belatedly delivered to London by Bulfinch Lambe, a former employee of the Royal African Company of England, who had spent some time in captivity in Dahomey, and who claimed to have written the letter at King Agaja's dictation. Lambe was accompanied to England by an African interpreter called "Captain Tom," who vouched for the letter's authenticity; this man's African name was given as "Adomo Oroonoko Tomo," though the middle name "Oroonoko" at least was surely not authentic, but borrowed from the popular romantic novel by Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko: or, the Royal Slave* (1689). An official enquiry by the Board of Trade decided that the letter itself was a forgery, though on grounds I at least find unpersuasive; but it was acknowledged that Lambe had been charged with some sort of message from King Agaja, and arrangements were

<sup>1</sup>The writing of this paper was done during the academic session 2000/01, when I held a Lady Davis Visiting Professorship at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in conjunction with a Visiting Fellowship at the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace in the same institution. My thanks to the Lady Davis Fellowship Trust and the Truman Institute for their support of this work.

<sup>2</sup>Robin Law, "Further light on Bulfinch Lambe and the 'Emperor of Pawpaw': King Agaja of Dahomey's Letter to King George I of England, 1726", *HA* 17(1990), 211-26.

made for the repatriation of the interpreter "Adomo Oroonoko Tomo" to Dahomey, which was effected in the following year, 1732.<sup>3</sup>

The original text of King Agaja's letter has not so far been traced. The text published in 1990 was taken from the printed record of proceedings in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom Parliament, where it had been read out by one of the members, John Henniker, during the debate on William Wilberforce's Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1789; following a well-established tradition of anti-Abolitionist polemic, Henniker cited references in the letter to the offering of human sacrifices in Dahomey to support the argument that those taken as slaves were being rescued from a worse fate within Africa.<sup>4</sup> Henniker explained that the letter had been found among the papers of the first Duke of Chandos (d. 1744), who had been Governor of the Royal African Company at the time of its delivery in England in 1731, and had been passed to himself by the latter's heir, the current Duke.

A detailed account of the mission of Bulfinch Lambe and Adomo Tomo that I published in 1991 assembled relevant material from various sources, including not only the text of the letter from the 1789 *Parliamentary Debates* and documents in the records of the Royal African Company and various departments of the British government preserved in the Public Record Office, London, but also reports of the mission in contemporary published accounts.<sup>5</sup> The last included references in two newspapers during 1731, *The Gentleman's Magazine* of London and the *Boston Weekly News-Letter*.<sup>6</sup> Despite the effort at comprehensiveness, it was not supposed that all potentially relevant documentation had been tracked down; and some additional material has since been brought to notice. A critical edition of Mrs Behn's *Oroonoko* published in 1997, for example, included a brief account of the visit of "Adomo Oroonoko Tomo" to London (as being, in part, inspired or at least influenced in its representation by the literary tradition initiated by the novel), which cited, in addition to material

<sup>3</sup>For the inquiry and its verdict, see Marion Johnson, "Bulfinch Lambe and the Emperor of Pawpaw: a Footnote to Agaja and the Slave Trade," *HA* 5(1978), 345-50.

<sup>4</sup>*The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, vol. 28 [1789-91] (London, 1816), 82-91.

<sup>5</sup>Robin Law, "King Agaja of Dahomey, the Slave Trade, and the Question of West African Plantations: The Embassy of Bulfinch Lambe and Adomo Tomo to England, 1726-32," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 19(1991), 127-63.

<sup>6</sup>*Gentleman's Magazine* I(1731), 216, 401, 542; *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, 15/22 July and 5/12 August 1731.

noted earlier, an advertisement for the performance of a play in honor of "Adomo Oroonoko Tomo" at the Drury Lane Theatre in April 1731, and a notice of Adomo Tomo's departure from England back to Africa in another London journal, *The Political State* for August 1732.<sup>7</sup> More substantially and significantly, my attention has lately been drawn to references to the mission in a second North American newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, which are the subject of the present note.<sup>8</sup>

The references to the Lambe/Tomo affair occur in three numbers of the *Gazette* during 1731-32. The first of these, published in August 1731 but reporting events in England in the previous May, and which refers to the visit of Lambe and Adomo Tomo to the royal court in London to present King Agaja's letter and to the impending baptism of Tomo at the country seat of the Duke of Chandos at Edgworth in Lancashire, does not add anything substantive to sources already known.<sup>9</sup> The second and third, published in June 1732, however, contain more interesting material, including, above all, a second version of the text of King Agaja's letter (published in two parts in consecutive issues). This is of value not only as representing an independent (and earlier) transcription of the text of this letter, but also because there are numerous discrepancies between the two texts. First, differences of spelling and syntax (e.g., as regards agreement in number between subject and verb) occur throughout the two texts, with the version in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of 1732 (hereafter 1732) systematically offering readings which are more "correct" (i.e., lexically and grammatically, rather than *qua* transcriptions) than that in the *Parliamentary Debates* for 1789 (hereafter 1789). This must, logically, reflect more interventionist editing in the process of preparation for publication of 1732, since there is no reason why an editor should have introduced such "errors" into the text in the course of preparation for publication of 1789. It does not, however, follow that 1789 is necessarily closer to the original than 1732 in other respects, as will be apparent from consideration of other discrepancies between the two.

Among these, second, 1732 includes words and phrases which do

<sup>7</sup>Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko: An Authoritative Text, Historical Backgrounds, Criticism*, ed. Joanna Lipking (New York, 1997), 147-52.

<sup>8</sup>*Pennsylvania Gazette*, nos 142 (29 July/5 Aug. 1731), 185 (8/15 June 1732), 186 (15/19 June 1732). My profound thanks to Daniel Rolph of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Gwenydd-Mercy College and Montgomery County Community College, who located these reports and supplied photocopies of them to me.

<sup>9</sup>Adomo Tomo's baptism is also referred to in the *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, 15/22 July 1731, probably on the basis of a common source.

not occur in 1789, while also omitting words and phrases which do occur in the latter; although it is conceivable that in particular cases editors might have added words which seemed to them desirable for greater comprehensibility or stylistic elegance, the more probable explanation of these differences is that both versions represent incomplete transcriptions of an original, perpetrating different omissions. Third, at a number of points the two texts offer different (rather than merely differently spelled) words and phrases. In some cases, these clearly represent alternative readings of the same word in the original manuscript (or in copies thereof): as evidently, for example, with reference to the number of battles credited to Agaja's brother and predecessor, given as "seventy-five" in 1732 but "seventy-nine" in 1789. In others, the two versions give words entirely dissimilar in spelling/appearance, although at least approximately equivalent in meaning: as, for example, "suffer" in 1732 and "permit" in 1789. Such cases may represent different conjectural readings of words illegible in the original manuscript; but alternatively, they may reflect conscious paraphrasing (if not merely sloppy copying) by one or other of the editors. On the face of it, there is no *a priori* reason to prefer one version, in general, to the other; any attempt at reconstruction of an archetype text would need to be based on a conflation of the two.

The discrepancies between the two texts do not in general materially affect the meaning, although there are points where additional material included in 1732 serves to clarify obscurities in 1789 (and *vice versa*). It nevertheless seems a useful exercise to publish the alternative version of the text in 1732, with indications of its points of difference from that reprinted earlier from 1789, and this is done in an appendix to this note. The case may serve at least to emphasize to historians the problems presented by sources which are (as are many—indeed, probably most—of those available for the history of precolonial Africa) only copies (including printed versions of manuscripts) rather than the original documents. These problems derive only partly from difficulties in reading and transcribing poorly written texts; they also reflect an indifference to detailed accuracy in the reproduction and citation of sources which characterized even serious scholarship (far more, one would suppose, newspaper reportage or partisan political rhetoric, as in the case of M.P. John Henniker) into, if not indeed beyond, the eighteenth century. It has recently been noted that translators of texts in this period "were wont to paraphrase loosely and to cut and even add at their own discretion."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Paul Hair, "Introduction," in P.E.H. Hair, Adam Jones, and Robin Law, eds., *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa, 1678-1712* (2 vols.: London, 1992), 1:xix.

This observation is also applicable, it may be suggested, to cases of transcription and quotation, even within a single language. This is a point that needs to be borne in mind when historians are tempted to place a great weight of inference on precise nuances of wording in their interpretation of such documents.

It may also be noted that, in addition to its version of the text of King Agaja's letter, the coverage of the Lambe/Tomo mission in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* includes a couple of other items of new (or supplementary) information which are of sufficient interest to warrant mention here. The *Gentleman's Magazine* at the end of 1731 reported the marriage in London of a Mrs. Johnson to a man called "Robert Widah," described as "a great officer belonging to the Prince of Pawpaw in Africa," i.e., to King Agaja of Dahomey; in my earlier treatment, being unaware of any other allusion to this "Robert Widah," I assumed that he was "one of Adomo [Tomo]'s entourage."<sup>11</sup> The *Pennsylvania Gazette*, however, reports that it was Adomo Tomo himself who married Mrs. Johnson (on 4 January 1732); presumably, therefore, "Robert Widah" was in fact the name taken by Tomo at his baptism in May 1731.<sup>12</sup> The *Gazette* also noted that Mrs. Johnson intended to go with her husband when he returned to his home in Africa, as he did later in 1732; but whether she did in fact accompany him back to Dahomey is not (or at least, not yet) known.

The qualificatory parenthesis in the preceding sentence is deliberate and considered. The case of Bulfinch Lambe, Adomo Tomo, and King Agaja's letter has brought home to me, at least, the rashness of assuming closure in the identification of relevant source material for any particular historical question—perhaps especially, but certainly not exclusively, in such a relatively new and therefore undeveloped field as that of precolonial African history. Treatments of the Lambe/Tomo mission published in the 1960s were thus constructed in ignorance of the actual text of Agaja's letter, although, as is now known, at least two versions of it existed in printed form, then as now;<sup>13</sup> and my own analysis in 1991, while citing one of these two printed versions of the letter, missed the other, along with other relevant material, in the

<sup>11</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine* I, 542; Law, "King Agaja of Dahomey," 146.

<sup>12</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, no. 186. "Widah": which Tomo adopted as his surname, was the name of the principal coastal port of Dahomey (more commonly "Why-dah," modern Ouidah), where the English Royal African Company's main factory in the kingdom was located.

<sup>13</sup> Especially I.A. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and Its Neighbours, 1708-1818* (Cambridge, 1967), 73-74.

*Pennsylvania Gazette* and elsewhere. It is not at all unlikely that further relevant evidence awaits rediscovery. In this connection, it may be noted that the same issue of the *Gazette* which recorded Adomo Tomo's marriage to Mrs. Johnson also retailed the fascinating information that Bulfinch Lambe intended to write a book:

Capt. *Lambe* designes soon to publish his Travels and Adventures, with the Manners, Customs, Laws, and other Matters relating to those Heathen Peoples and Countries, he having been farther in Land than ever any European was before; as also an Account of the Rise of the late great Wars, Revolutions and Conquests, by which means several Great Kingdoms were laid waste, in the Time Capt. *Lambe* was among them, by the most powerful and victorious King of *Dauhomay*, now Emperor of *Pawpaw*.

I know of no evidence that Lambe ever wrote this projected work, or if he did that the text has survived, but this may be because I have no idea where, if it exists, the text might now be located (just as I once had no idea where to look for the text of King Agaja's letter transmitted by the same Lambe). At any rate, readers of this journal are enjoined to be on the lookout for the manuscript.

### The Text

The text is given below as printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 1732; with indications of variations between this and the version printed in the *Parliamentary History of England* for 1789. Additional words in 1732 which are not in 1789 are given in italics; words in 1789 but omitted in 1732 are given within square brackets; other variations between the two texts are noted in footnotes. Differences in spelling of words are not generally noted, except in the cases of African toponyms and personal names; likewise, purely grammatical variations (e.g. between singular and plural forms of verbs) and differences in punctuation are not noted.

#### Part 1, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, no. 185, 8/15 June 1732

From my great and principal palace of Abomey, in the Kingdom of Dauhomay,<sup>14</sup> and Empire of Paupau.<sup>15</sup> [January 1726,] Great Prince,

<sup>14</sup>“Dawhomay” in 1789, here and subsequently.

<sup>15</sup>“Pawpow” in 1789.

Being informed, and sensible of your mighty Wars, Grandeur and Power, over other white Kings and Kingdoms, makes me send home your Subject Bulfinch Lambe, whom we call Yewo, or white Man, not having or ever had any in my Kingdom<sup>16</sup> before, though my Brother and Father, *Kings* before me, made considerable Offers to the Kings of Ardah, Whidah, and Jacquin, to permit and encourage one to come to us; that we might see what we had so much heard of, and look upon, as it were, almost equal to our Gods; tho' many of my common Subjects never thought of such People's being in the World, till I made a Captive of the said white Man, at my Conquest over the Great King and Kingdom of Ardah, my Country being from the great Water, or Sea, about three hundred Miles, which *neither* We, nor any of our Subjects, unless when made Slaves, were ever permitted to come and see;<sup>17</sup> for it was impossible to come thither<sup>18</sup> without passing through the Territories<sup>19</sup> of the then great King of Ardah, and<sup>20</sup> the Whidahs,<sup>21</sup> or Jacquins Country, which they would not suffer.<sup>22</sup>

I hope this may be a Means of making Us<sup>23</sup> known to your Majesty, and Subjects trading<sup>24</sup> to these Parts; and as a Token of desired Friendship and Alliance, send by him to your Majesty, a Present of forty Slaves; and if you desire it, forty times forty are at your Service. The other Forty which we have given him, he is to make use of as he thinks fit, to enable him to return to us again, and bring back with him his Linguist,<sup>25</sup> Adomo Tomo,<sup>26</sup> for whom we have great value.

Your African Company, of which we understand you are the Chief, we are inform'd, do not trade so much as usual, by Reason they want the Friendship and Encouragement they formerly had<sup>27</sup> from your Predecessors; but *it is* now hoped<sup>28</sup> you will Promote Trade to these Parts; and your People shall find much better Usage and Treatment

<sup>16</sup>1789: "our kingdoms"

<sup>17</sup>1789: "were ever permitted to come and see, unless when made slaves."

<sup>18</sup>1789: "thare [=there]"

<sup>19</sup>1789: "country"

<sup>20</sup>1789: "also"

<sup>21</sup>1789: "Widah's". 1789 generally gives this spelling also subsequently, but sometimes the spelling "Whidah," as in 1732.

<sup>22</sup>1789: "permit"

<sup>23</sup>1789: "me". On several subsequent occasions also, which are not specifically noted, 1789 uses the first-person singular where 1732 has plural forms.

<sup>24</sup>1789: "trading subjects"

<sup>25</sup>1789: "linguister," here and subsequently.

<sup>26</sup>1789: "Adome [sic] Oronoco Als Captain Tain [sic: =Tom]"

<sup>27</sup>1789: "your friendship and enco[u]ragement, as formerly they had."

<sup>28</sup>1789: "but now hope"

than they did in the Reign of the Arbitrary King or Emperor of Ardah and Jacquin, &c.

I am mightily surprised at one Thing this white Man tells me, amongst others; which is that hereafter there will be a Change<sup>29</sup> of all Things; no more Wars, [no more Trade, nor] no more People. Die we must; that we see daily! But the other startles me: For after Death we certainly believe we shall be some Thing in the other World as well as this; and who shall be afraid to die, which is a thing so common!

I much admire the white Man's Way of Speaking<sup>30</sup> by Writing, the Knowledge of which, with<sup>31</sup> other Things, your God has given you beyond us, by which Means you know his Ways. We think and believe him to be the greatest of Gods, and that he has appointed our Gods, or Fetishes,<sup>32</sup> to rule, govern, direct, kill or destroy us as we act.

But we think it very strange, that your God's<sup>33</sup> Laws and Customs, confine so great a King to one Wife; and that the Women have, and are allow'd, so much Power, as we hear, [they are] even to reign over Men. But no more of that, Customs of Countries differ.

This white Man we have detained near these three Years, to inform us, as much as he could, of your Manners, Customs and Laws; and withal, till I had subdu'd other petty Kingdoms, and made myself sole Monarch down to the Sea. And now,<sup>34</sup> *within Land*, I have Work enough for many Years, so that *to carry on a flourishing Trade between us*, there *neither* will nor shall be any want of Slaves.

I have yet that proud King and People of Whidah to subdue, who vainly think themselves above my Power; but I will let them see that there is no withstanding the Dauhomains, unless their own Gods fight against them.

By this white Man's Means and Persuasions, I have desisted for this Year past, and have likewise forborn going against the Jacquins,<sup>35</sup> who have since submitted themselves, and become Tributary to me, he telling me that it would be a Discouragement to Trade, and I should frighten away the white Men, for whom I have a great value. But now I find I have no way to bring the Whidahs under, but by Force, it must be done; and when I send my Generals and Captains of War<sup>36</sup> upon an Errand, they must not come back without Success.

<sup>29</sup>1789: "restitution"

<sup>30</sup>1789: "corresponding"

<sup>31</sup>1789: "and"

<sup>32</sup>1789: "feteashes," here and subsequently.

<sup>33</sup>1789: "God,"

<sup>34</sup>1789: "then"

<sup>35</sup>1789: "on Jacquin"

<sup>36</sup>1789: "general and captain of war"

My Grandfather was no Warriour, and only enlarged his Dominions by conquering one Kingdom; my Father nine; but my Brother fought seventy-five<sup>37</sup> Battles, in which he subdued several petty Kingdoms; and<sup>38</sup> my self have fought two hundred and nine [battles], in which I have subdued many great Kings and Kingdoms, some of which are continually revolting, and keep me employed.

By Computation I can send near five hundred thousand armed and well skilled Men to Battle, War<sup>39</sup> being what all my Subjects are bred to; but the women stay at home to plant and manure the Earth. I also keep a sufficient Number of armed Forces about me, lest I should be attacked or surprized from the Northward, Eastward or, Westward, when<sup>40</sup> my Army *may be* gone to Southward.

Both I and my Predecessors were, and are great Admirers of Fire-Arms, and have almost entirely left off the Use of Bows and Arrows, though much nearer the Sea *they* use them still, and other [old] fashioned Weapons, as scragged Spears, and a short sort of a Bat or Stick with a large Knob at the End, which they so dexterously throw, that wherever it hits it prodigiously bruises and wounds; but we think none better than the Gun, and a heavy<sup>41</sup> sort of [muskeet or]<sup>42</sup> Cutlass, which we make our selves, that will cleave as a broad Ax.

Could we but come into the Secret of making Powder, or be better supply'd, I should spend vast Quantities in my Diversion, having at the Conquest of Ardah, taken several Pieces of Cannon, which were thought a great thing to be brought up so far as that Place;<sup>43</sup> but my People brought them up to me, with several others I have since purchased, which have been very difficult and troublesome to bring by hand so far in Land; but my People stick or stop at nothing to serve me, for I reward them well, and punish them well, according to their Deserts; a Rule with me in Government.

As I acknowledge you the Greatest of Kings, under your Union Flag, which I take<sup>44</sup> upon me to hoist, I drink your Majesty's Health, *to the noble Sound of Cannon*: And this I should oftner do, only I am obliged always to keep a sufficient Magazine of Powder, for fear of

<sup>37</sup>1789: "seventy-nine"

<sup>38</sup>1789: "but"

<sup>39</sup>1789: "that"

<sup>40</sup>1789: "and"

<sup>41</sup>1789: "neree," perhaps for "nere [=near]"

<sup>42</sup>1789 here is clearly corrupt: "muskeet [=musket]," if it was in the original text, must evidently have been an alternative for "gun" rather than for "cutlass."

<sup>43</sup>1789: "thare [=there]"

<sup>44</sup>1789: "have taken"

being attacked by some great Countries, which are beyond and wide of me; but as they are at a vast Distance, and must be a considerable time a coming, I have always time to prepare to receive them; as in my Brother's Reign we did<sup>45</sup> the great Hello Yawzy Cocotoo Hallecoo Trode Tropa,<sup>46</sup> King of Weemie,<sup>47</sup> who with his Army of several hundred Thousands we<sup>48</sup> destroyed, my self being then Head General.

The King's Head we have preserved to this Day, with Flesh and Hair on; the Heads of his Generals we distinguish[ed] by giving them Places on each Side of the Doors of our Fetiche Houses, and those of his under Captains [of warr]<sup>49</sup> have paved all [before] the Doors; and the Heads of the common Soldiers we *have set*<sup>50</sup> round the Walls of the Palace of our Ancestors, as close as they can lie one by another; and since that, I have been so fortunate in my Wars,<sup>51</sup> that I have not only compeated *the said Palace*,<sup>52</sup> which is in Circumference about three Miles, but three fourths of my House before I was King, which is about a Mile and half round, and hope in time to compleat the out Walls of [all] my great Houses in the same Manner, which are in Number Seven, and contain my Wives, [which are] in Number [at least] as many Thousands, besides Household Slaves; but no Man sleeps within the Walls of any of them after Sunset, but my self.

My Houses, under my self, are entirely governed by my chief Wives, with all the Ease imaginable, *with the Help of*<sup>53</sup> Doorkeepers and their Assistants, who are always a robust sort of Women Slaves. I have no Disturbances or Controversies whatever, either amongst my Wives or other Subjects, every one knowing their Duty, Place, and Stations; for if any transgress against my Laws or Customs, or at least those of my Forefathers, they must suffer [by] Death; and sometimes *it is* not in my Power to save them, without violating the Laws of my Gods, Kingdom and Predecessors, and bringing their Curse upon me and my Country. However, I never give Sentence without sufficient Proof, or the Gods convicting them by their taking the Fetishe; and after that, I sometimes endeavour to make it up by their Contrition,

<sup>45</sup>1789: "as we did in my brother's reigne"

<sup>46</sup>1789: "Nullow Yowzie Cocotow Hallecewtrode Tropa." The spelling "Yawzy" in 1732 is probably closer to the original, the name of this king being recalled in local tradition as Yahaze.

<sup>47</sup>1789: "Wimey"

<sup>48</sup>1789: "were"

<sup>49</sup>1789: "and his under captains of warr's heads"

<sup>50</sup>1789: "shatt [?=set]"

<sup>51</sup>1789: "in warr"

<sup>52</sup>1789: "that"

<sup>53</sup>1789: "unless"

or some Offerings to the Gods and my deceased Relations, who we firmly believe have a Power of revenging any Wrongs done to them, by violating the Laws and Customs of their Country and Ancestors; and that it is in their Power also to prosper us, or frustrate our Designs; nay, even to take away our Lives.

I hope you, or at least your trading Subjects, will send me back this White Man, as Governor, or Chief [over] other white Men and Women, to live in my country, and they shall have as many of my Subjects as they desire, to assist them in building a Castle, Fort, House or Houses as they shall think fit, and suitable<sup>54</sup> for Trade.

When I send my Forces against Whidah, as I fully purpose<sup>55</sup> to do; I shall give Orders to my Generals to take Care not to hurt any of the white Men, in Goods or Persons, if they keep in their Fort and Factory: But if they come in a warlike Manner to assist the King and People, and happen to be killed or wounded, *you* must not blame me or my People.

This white man will informe your Merchants, Traders to my Country, what I desire and is fit for me, for there is nothing so costly, rich, and fine, but what I will purchase, even to a thousand Slaves for any single Thing, that may be worth it; He knows what I['le] like besides the common Commodities, as Guns, Powder, Cowries (*which is* our Money), &c.

[For] As I hear you are the greatest of white Kings, so I think my self the greatest of black Ones, an<sup>56</sup> Emperor having [now] so<sup>57</sup> many Kings under me, who durst not come into my Presence without falling flat on the Ground, and rubbing their Mouths nine times in the Dust, before they open them<sup>58</sup> to speak to me; and when I confer any Dignities or Favours on them, wipe the Soles of my Feet with the Hair of their Heads, throwing Dust over themselves, and making the very Skies ring with their, and their People's Acclamations. But this only, as to my own People and Subjects; *for* as to the white Man, he always sat in a Chair in my Presence, as I did, and I always shewed him the same Compliments as he shewed me, and shall continue to all white Men the same, according to their Stations.

## Part 2 (*Pennsylvania Gazette*, no.186, 15/19 June 1732)

My Customs, *Great Sir*, differ very much from those of the Kings of

<sup>54</sup>1789: "convenient"

<sup>55</sup>1789: "propose"

<sup>56</sup>1789: "or"

<sup>57</sup>1789: "of," clearly in error.

<sup>58</sup>1789: "opens it"

Ardah; for they, after being made Kings, never went out of Doors or abroad, to be seen by the common People, but always indulged and diverted themselves in the small Compass of their Palace amongst their Wives, who were at other times under the Care<sup>59</sup> of their Eunuchs; and at the Conquest of that Country, I took several of them along with the<sup>60</sup> Wives: The Women I thought good to add to my own, as we esteem our selves, and are looked upon my all neighbouring Nations to be greater or richer, the more *Women* we have. But as to the Eunuchs (a useless sort of Fellows) I gave them back to the King's<sup>61</sup> Son, with some Thousands of his old People and Relations, on my restoring him to his Kingdom, which is now tributary to me, with the rest of his dependant Kingdoms, Nine of whose Princes came, in one Month, to be reinstated by me, which I did with the same Ceremony as formerly done by the Kings of Ardah, which is as follows, viz. *All my great Caboshires, Judges, Generals and Captains of War &c.* being assembled, they signify to some of them, that they are come to submit themselves and Countries to me, and that for ever after they will own no one to be great King or Emperor but Me and my Successors, denying all Allegiance to the *Brother of the King* of Ardah; *the said King of Ardah*<sup>62</sup> we<sup>63</sup> killed in the Conquest, but<sup>64</sup> *his Brother* now, though as it were in the bushes, pretends a Right of being the great King or Emperor of Ardah, (tho' I have gotten it by Force of Arms, and have made the Son of the late King<sup>65</sup> to be King under me, in the same Manner as the rest) but, if *this Pretender*<sup>66</sup> has not a great Care, he and his Adherents may chance to share the same Fate [as] his Brother did, for I will have his Head if possible. But as to the Ceremony, It being signified to me, as before said, I order a silk Gown, Hat, Chair, and Sword, to be brought out<sup>67</sup> by separate Persons, and carried before me to the Prince who is to receive them. *He being on his Knees, I order him to rise and receive them;* upon which two of my old Oves or Judges vest him with the Gown and Hat, then I seat him in the Chair, and deliver [to] him the Sword, which he is to be Assistant to me with, and defend his Country against any of our

<sup>59</sup>1789: "was under the care att other times"

<sup>60</sup>1789: "his"

<sup>61</sup>1789: "his"

<sup>62</sup>1789: "which"

<sup>63</sup>1789: "was"

<sup>64</sup>1789: "and"

<sup>65</sup>1789: "and the son of the late king has been made by me"

<sup>66</sup>1789: "he".

<sup>67</sup>1789 here has "out but," presumably through a combination of misreading and dittoigraphy.

Enemies. This being done he rises from the Chair, falls on the Ground, and kisses it nine Times, and between every three, clapping his Hands in a very regular Manner. The same is done by all his Caboshires<sup>68</sup> and People about him, which I answer by clapping of my Hands standing. After this, he remains on his Knees, or sitting, or lying on the Ground, for he is not fit to sit on any thing above it in my Presence; the Chair, after that Time,<sup>69</sup> being for his own House amongst his own Subjects. After this I dismiss him, with giving him and *his* People several Presents of Clothes,<sup>70</sup> Coral, Brandy, Pipes and Tobacco, and a Sum of Money to bear their Expences home; they being pleased with the Reception they *have* met with, and I with having added a Kingdom to my Dominions.

We have a Custom which is quite contrary to that of the Ardrahrians. I am obliged to go out at different Times in the Year, and strew great Quantities of Goods and Money amongst the Common People, and make Sacrifices to our Gods and Forefathers, sometimes of Slaves (which part of the Custom I have much broken) sometimes of Horses, other times of Oxen and other Creatures.

I very often besides, love to go abroad, about eight or ten Miles an End, in what is called by the Portuguese a Serpentine, not but that I have [many] fine Chairs, but do not care to trust to my People's carrying them, not being so used to them as the other. When I am out, I fix my self under some great shady Trees, where I view what Number of armed People I have ready, in two or three Hours. By this time, up come two or three hundred of my inferiour Wives, [the chief favourites being about my person in sundry stations,] some to fan and cool me, others to keep the Flies away with Whisks, others holding my Arms, as Gun, Pistol,<sup>71</sup> and Sabre, &c. Others again holding Kedysalls or Umbrellas, which stand on the Ground and make a Canopy over my Chair; another to fill and light my Pipe, which being done, I order the aforesaid Bands of Women to be unloaded, who have each a Case of Brandy, tho' cloathed in Crimson, Green, Blue, and Black Velvet, and fine Silks, and covered with great Quantities of large Coral: For my Slaves buy me Things of all Nations; besides I have many fine Things which come over Land by a People, who<sup>72</sup> are called Mallays, and are in coming some Months. Their Religion is the Mahometan,<sup>73</sup> and *they* tell me, that near the Sea, on the other side,

<sup>68</sup>1789: "Caboshiers," here and subsequently.

<sup>69</sup>1789: "after that time, the chaire"

<sup>70</sup>1789: "clauth [=cloth]"

<sup>71</sup>1789: "guns, pistols"

<sup>72</sup>1789: "which"

<sup>73</sup>1789: "are Mahometans"

are a Sort of white Men. I have many of these Mallays<sup>74</sup> in my Country, who<sup>75</sup> follow their several Occupations, as well as Trading, in which I give them great Encouragement, as I do to all Strangers: I have appointed a Governor, or petty King, of their own, over them. These were the People, who some of them used to go down to Whidah and Jacquin, and come back, and give us an Account of the strange<sup>76</sup> Manner of Ships and white Men coming to trade there, which we long found to be true by their Guns, Powder, and all sorts of Goods being brought from Market to Market.

But to return: When I have smok'd my Pipe, and my People [have] pretty well exercis'd themselves in Activity of Body, by Running, Leaping, and firing their Arms, as if engag'd; I order my Brandy to be distributed, which is soon made away with; and then the Sun being pretty well gone, I return home with the Acclamations of my People, with my Drums beating, and Horns of different Sorts sounding, with other kind<sup>77</sup> of [my] Country Musick, in which I have great Numbers Day and Night continually employed about my House.

I shall not trouble you much more on these Things, but hope to hear from your Majesty by<sup>78</sup> the aforesaid white Man, who has promised me to return and bring with him his aforesaid Linguist, [Captain Tom,] who is one of the King of Jacquin's Family, and whom I likewise took at Ardah with the white Man;<sup>79</sup> and being desirous to go and see England, I send him, that on his Return, unless Death prevents, he may give me a large Account of your Majesty's Countries and Dominions, and [that he] may the better qualifie himself for the great Post of Yewo Gah, [als, Captain Blanco,] or the White Man's Caboshire, which Post I intend to give him on his Return; and hope he will be more fit and capable to answer the white Men's Ends, than any one heretofore, knowing their Ways and Customs.

So once<sup>80</sup> more hoping your Majesty, the Company, or *other* trading Subjects, will not fail to send me back this White Man, who is now to me as much as my Son, [whom I designe shall succeed me]; and whoever comes with him shall not want Encouragement; neither shall any Ship that comes by his Means, and to him, pay any Tribute or Customs to me (as they did to the late King of Ardah) for six Years after his arrival at Jacquin, or Dauhomay.

<sup>74</sup>1789: "people"

<sup>75</sup>1789: "and"

<sup>76</sup>1789: "stranger"

<sup>77</sup>1789: "sortes"

<sup>78</sup>1789: "per"

<sup>79</sup>1789: "him"

<sup>80</sup>1789: "one," evidently in error.

He can inform you more at large, of my Wars, Conquests, Greatness and Grandeur, tho' *I am* a Black; so shall take Leave, and hope your God will always prosper your Wars and undertakings, and commit the said white Man to his and your Care; for I shall not fail, [as I have already done,] to offer Sacrifices to mine continually for his Preservation and safe Return; with Assurances to them, that on that Day,<sup>81</sup> I will give for that Purpose, Oxen, Hogs, Sheep, and Goats, &c. and shall be more rejoiced at it, than at the greatest Battle or Conquest I ever won; so I remain, with the most profound Respects, as the Gods have made us Blacks to serve you, Great Prince! Your Majesty's most faithful and obedient Friend and humble Servant,

Trudo, Audato, Povesau, Danger Enjo, Suveveto, Ene Mottee, Adde Pon, A Poulo, Co Hullo Necresy,<sup>82</sup> King of Dauhomay, and Emperor of Paupau.<sup>83</sup>

[P.S. Could I write my own hand, or explain myself as I would, I should say a great deal, but believe this white man has done it as much as possible.]

<sup>81</sup>1789: "it"

<sup>82</sup>1789: "Trudo Audato Povesaw Daujerenjon Suveveto Ene-Mottee Addee Pow, a Powlo Cow Hullow Necresy"

<sup>83</sup>1789: "Emperor of Dawhomay"